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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

29 June 1951

SUBJECT: SE-8: POSSIBLE COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES IN SUGGESTING
A CEASE-FIRE IN KOREA
(For Board consideration)

1. On 23 June, Soviet UN Chief Delegate Malik, speaking on a UN program series, presented a vague suggestion that the "belligerents" should start discussions for a "cease fire and armistice" in Korea. On 27 June Malik's statement was clarified to some extent by Soviet Acting Foreign Minister Gromyko, who stated to US Ambassador Kirk that the representatives of parties fighting in Korea ("representatives of the Unified Command plus South Korean Command ^{and} of the North Korean People's Republic Command plus representatives of the Chinese Volunteer Units") should meet and conclude a military armistice, to include a cease-fire. Such an armistice, Gromyko said, would be limited to strictly military issues and would not involve political or territorial matters. Gromyko also said that assurances against resumption of hostilities should be discussed between the military representatives formulating the terms of the military armistice.

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2. Peiping's only reaction to the Malik speech was contained in an editorial in the semi-official Peiping People's Daily. The editorial ~~generally~~ endorsed Malik's proposal, but failed to clarify Peiping's attitude on the cease-fire. The only other significant Communist development in connection with the cease-fire suggestion was a reported North Korean broadcast on 27 June in which the Communist propaganda line calling on the People's Army to drive the enemy into the sea was changed to driving "the enemy within the 38th Parallel."

CURRENT SITUATION IN NORTH KOREA AND MANCHURIA

3. Communist forces in Korea have suffered more than a million casualties in the face of a substantial increase in the effectiveness of UN forces. North Korean losses have strained the limits of available North Korean manpower, and North Korean forces are now capable of only limited offensive actions. The Chinese Communists can replace their heavy casualties and can continue large scale military operations in Korea if they receive assistance from the Soviet Union in replacing equipment losses. Unless, however, the Chinese Communists develop and employ substantial numbers of heavily equipped troops ^{with} ~~and~~ strong air support, they not only will continue to be unsuccessful in attempts to defeat UN forces ^{also} but ^{also} may well suffer ~~eventually defeat~~ *driven from North Korea.*

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in the Korean areas

antiaircraft equipment, and technical personnel. Soviet pilots may have flown jet aircraft in combat and fairly reliable reports state that Soviet crews are manning antiaircraft equipment in North Korea. There are also unconfirmed reports of Soviet combat troops in many locations throughout Manchuria, including towns near the Korean border, but the available evidence does not give ~~a~~ ^{a bad} clear indication of a significant increase of Soviet participation ^{in the Korean fighting} in the near future.

6. Recent POW reports indicate growing friction between Chinese and North Koreans and ^{a bad} possibly serious food situation in North Korea. The reports also indicate that Communist morale in Korea has been good except among troops exposed to several days of combat under very severe conditions.

POSSIBLE SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN PROPOSING CEASE-FIRE

A.

~~Discussion of Cease-Fire without firm Intention of Bringing Negotiations to a Conclusion~~

7. The Kremlin may have made its cease-fire proposal ~~to~~ ^{firm} gain a military respite of ~~extensive~~ ^{brief} duration and with no intention of carrying through the negotiations to the conclusions of a cease-fire. ^{(2) Argument for such a Course of Action} The Politburo may have reasoned that the mere announcement of a Soviet "desire" to bring

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On, similarly, the Kremlin may have intended to conclude a cease-fire and armistice of limited duration, through providing temporary military respite preparatory to a resumption of hostilities.

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about a cease-fire would be a potent propaganda weapon in the Soviet "peace" campaign, and that a subsequent accusation, however fraudulent, that the UN refused "to cooperate in a peaceful settlement" could be exploited in further support of that campaign. (i) The Kremlin may also have estimated that the mere suggestion of a cease-fire would bring to the fore divergent views on the conditions for a Korean settlement, with divisive effects within and among the UN countries (a great divergence of views is already evident between the Republic of Korea and its UN allies). (iii) Finally, In view of the considerable Communist build-up in the Far East, the Kremlin may intend to engineer a

~~_____~~ in order to "justify" increased Soviet support to the Chinese Communists and North Koreans and which could possibly ~~increase~~ ^{the commitment of} Soviet forces in combat.

Failure of the cease-fire discussions

(i) Arguments against such a course of action
Although the Kremlin will undoubtedly press vigorously the propaganda advantages of its proposal and will be quick to exploit any division which might appear among the UN allies, these advantages would be merely temporary if the Communists in fact shortly ~~break off the discussions~~ ^{break off the discussions}. (ii) Similarly, if the Communists ~~break off the discussions~~ ^{break off the discussions}, there would be little assurance that the USSR would gain substantial ~~advantage~~ ^{advantage}.

~~little~~ ^{its effort} in attempting to exploit the Soviet cease-fire proposal to "justify" a subsequent increase in Soviet support of the Chinese Communists and North Koreans.

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What the Communist forces mainly lack is airpower and heavy weapons, and the Kremlin probably estimates that Soviet efforts to provide them would eventually lead to such thinly-veiled commitment of Soviet forces against US forces that the US and USSR would be engaged in a de facto local war, which, if the US felt compelled to recognize its existence, might at any time develop into a general war. We have estimated that at the present time the USSR wishes to avoid general war with the US, and, therefore, we consider this course of action unlikely as a way of breaking the present military deadlock.

(2) Probability of this Course of Action.

B. ~~Longer Though Still Temporary Military Respite as a Result of Conducting a Cease-Fire of Limited Duration~~ Intend to Resume Hostilities
Conclusion

10. The Soviet cease-fire proposal may have been intended to result in conclusion of a cease-fire and armistice of limited duration, thus providing the Communists a longer though still temporary military respite provided by a cease-fire of limited duration to a resumption of hostilities. This would give the Communists time in which they might improve their logistic and tactical situation both within Korea itself and in areas beyond the cognizance of UN inspection teams (e.g., Manchuria). A cease-fire could serve to interrupt successful UN military action in Korea at a point where important Communist military positions are about to be overrun, and during a season of the year particularly favorable to the use of mechanized ground equipment and naval and air power.

Since the propaganda advantages would be temporary, ~~the course of action~~

(a) Argument for this course of action

1. Propaganda and psychological warfare advantages limited to 7-10 (iii) would be enough to bring the Communists to a cease-fire.

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11. It is virtually certain, however, that Communist efforts of the scope necessary to change the military balance of power in Korea materially would be detected at an early stage and would presumably be violations of the cease-fire provisions. Furthermore, the nature of Communist needs in

Korea would call for increased Soviet support, possibly leading to the open commitment of Soviet forces, thus compounding the risks of war with the US which we have estimated the USSR wishes to avoid at this time. Thus, given Soviet reluctance to precipitate general war with the US, the advantages of a temporary respite to the Communist forces would be limited and would be unlikely basically to alter the military situation in Korea.

C. Prolonged Armistice

12. A possible Communist course of action would be to meet the UN demands for an armistice, but to prolong the armistice indefinitely and to conduct negotiations for a final military, territorial, and political settlement without actually intending to make any important concessions which would permit such a settlement.

(a) Argument for such a course of action:

(i) A prolonged armistice would, in effect, restore the status quo ante bellum. In the light of the heavy

It is certainly hard to see how the Communist could report a breakthrough in their military position in North Korea sufficiently

by conducting protected

Conclusion and Indefinite Prolongation of the Armistice without Firm Intentions of Arriving at a Final Settlement of the Korean Conflict

of the Korean conflict, his intention of making concessions that final

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cost of the Korean war thus far, the Communists might well feel that de facto control over the area north of the 38th Parallel represented the most favorable terms on which the Korean war could be brought to a close. ~~The new propaganda line emanating~~

~~from North Korea (see para. 2) indicates that the Communists may have significantly lowered their sights in Korea.~~

(ii) A prolonged armistice ~~would~~ ^{would} not commit the Communists to ~~accept~~ UN requirements for a final settlement and, moreover, ~~would enable~~ ^{would enable} the Chinese Communists to retreat from their original political demands (a seat in the UN, control over Formosa, etc.) with the consequent loss of face which such a retreat would entail.

(iii) A prolonged armistice without a final settlement ^{substantial} would tie up UN forces of approximately the present size for an indefinite period ~~in an area remote from the more important area of Western Europe.~~

^{a prolonged armistice might}
(iv) This course of action ~~not~~ subject UN troops in the field to a debilitating and demoralizing period of inaction and create official and popular pressures on the part of the UN belligerents to withdraw their forces from Korea.

^{a prolonged armistice might}
(v) ~~it may~~ slow down the rate of mobilization and rearmament of the free world.

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A prolonged armistice would
(vi) ~~It will~~ provide the Chinese Communists with an extended respite which they could use to further consolidate their control within China.

A prolonged armistice would
(vii) ~~It will~~ give the Communists time to increase the combat effectiveness of forces in training, including such elite forces as may be training with modern Soviet weapons in Manchuria. ~~The availability of these troops would substantially increase Communist capabilities for operations in Korea if hostilities were resumed.~~

A prolonged armistice would
(viii) ~~It will~~ give the Peiping regime time to strengthen its defenses along the east coast ~~in preparation for~~ against possible Nationalist assaults, and/or permit Peiping to build up strength in South China for possible action against Southeast Asia or Hong Kong and in East China for a possible invasion of Taiwan. ~~It might also provide the USSR with the opportunity to exact pressure on vulnerable areas in Europe and the Middle East.~~

(b) Arguments against this course of action:

The abandonment of this Communist objective of driving UN forces out of Korea
(i) ~~This course of action might have a demoralizing effect on Communist forces in Korea and might also aggravate existing frictions between the Chinese and the North Koreans.~~
A prolonged armistice in Korea
~~It might also strain Sino-Soviet relations by bringing to the fore problems of control over North Korea and possibly Manchuria,~~

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(ii) An extended period of discussion under the terms of an armistice might provide an opportunity for UN inspection teams to obtain information that would limit Soviet capabilities for military and political exploitation of the Communist position in North Korea.

(c) Probability of this course of action:

We believe this course of action is the one that the Communists are most likely to follow. By agreeing to an armistice and prolonging indefinitely the discussions of a final settlement, the Communists may well obtain for an extended period of time ^{effective control of North Korea} ~~and they could hope for out of a final settlement without paying the price in the form of political, military, and territorial concessions ^{and without the} ~~on in the form of loss of international prestige that would be involved in a final settlement on terms that did not satisfy the Communist objective of control of all Korea.~~~~

^{conclusion of an} ~~D. Armistice to be Followed by Military, Territorial, and Political Settlement.~~ ^{with Firm Intention of Concluding a}

13. A ^{fourth} ~~possible~~ possible course of action for the Communists would be to agree to UN armistice terms as a first step toward ~~the attainment of~~ a final military, territorial, and political settlement of the Korean conflict.

(a) Arguments for this course of action:

(i) ^{A settlement} The final resolution of the Korean conflict would permit the Communists to close out what ^{they consider} may be a costly and unrewarding incident. It is conceivable that both the USSR and Communist China are so ^{anxious to avoid at this time} unprepared for global war that they would be willing to ^{accept a serious local} suffer a temporary setback in order to preserve and build up their strength ~~for a global war at a time of their own choosing.~~

(ii) A final settlement of the Korean ^{conflict} would permit the Chinese Communists to ^{proceed with} complete the consolidation of China, to ^{and} redeploy and strengthen their forces ^{possible} for military operations against what they may estimate as being more important areas ^{such as} in Southeast Asia or against Taiwan.

(iii) A final settlement of the Korean ^{conflict} would result in the withdrawal of UN forces from Korea and would remove what ~~Chinese~~ Communists ^{have declared to be a} and ~~Russians may regard as~~ a ^{standing} ~~immediate~~ threat to the security of Manchuria and the Soviet Union.

(iv) The withdrawal of UN troops that would follow final settlement of the Korean conflict would permit the ~~Chinese~~ Communists to pursue by political and subversive ^{in Korea} means what they failed ^{in Korea} to achieve by military methods.

(v) A final settlement of the Korean war would slow the rate of Western rearmament and mobilization by removing the sense of urgency which the hostilities in Korea have created.

(b) Arguments against this course of action:

(i) ^{UN} The ^{UN} terms on which UN agreement can be obtained for a final settlement in Korea ^{would include provision for} ~~will~~ probably entail the eventual unification of Korea under a ~~democratic type~~ government ^{chosen in free supervised elections, and such a settlement is contrary to their interests.} ~~which the Communists will probably regard as a threat to their~~ ^{would} ~~security.~~

(ii) For the foreseeable future, it is probable ^{in a reunited Korean-Communist} that ~~the democratic elements in Korea~~ including the Army of ^{would} the ROK ~~will~~ be able to outweigh the influence of the ~~heavily~~ ^{reduced} ~~depleted~~ and greatly disorganized Korean Communist ^{elements,} ~~forces in~~ that ~~country~~ ^{having} in the absence of strong support from the Chinese Communists or the USSR, ^{which} ~~which~~ support ^{presumably} would ~~probably~~ be precluded by the terms of the final settlement.

(iii) A final settlement ^{UN} in Korea on ^{UN} terms that ~~the UN will accept~~ would be a tremendous propaganda victory for the West and would ^{completely} ~~destroy~~ the myth that Communism is an irresistible force ^{This would entail a loss of} ~~with a consequent decline in the~~ prestige of both Communist China and the USSR throughout the world ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~general and the Far East, to particularly in~~

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(c) Probability of this course of action:

Unless the USSR and Communist China are ^{so inclined} actually ~~so weak at this time as to desire~~ to liquidate the Korean conflict ^{that they would do so at almost any price}, it would appear ^{is almost certain} doubtful that they ~~will~~ ^{would not} retreat very far from their ^{adopt this course of action} previously announced terms. Since ~~we~~ ^{we do not} believe that the USSR and Communist China are ~~not~~ in fact ^{under sufficient} in such serious straits, and since the only advantage to them of a final settlement over and above a prolonged armistice would be the removal of UN forces from Korea (and it may be that in terms of global considerations they would prefer to see UN forces tied up in Korea), we estimate that the USSR and Communist China are probably not interested in pursuing post-armistice negotiations with a view toward a final settlement on ~~the~~ ^{acceptable} terms.

Handwritten notes:
 - "so inclined" above "actually"
 - "that they would do so at almost any price" above "it would appear"
 - "is almost certain" above "doubtful"
 - "would not" above "will"
 - "adopt this course of action" above "previously announced terms"
 - "we do not" above "we"
 - "under sufficient" above "in fact"
 - "to liquidate the Korean conflict as to make" written vertically on the right side.

CONCLUSIONS :

7. On the basis of present evidence, it is impossible to ^{determine} ~~predict with confidence~~ what objectives ^{the} the Kremlin had in proposing a cease-fire in Korea ^{to predict with any assurance the} or ~~what~~ ^{its} course of action ~~it~~ ^{the} ~~Communist~~ ^{are likely} actually ~~intend~~ ^{to pursue} to pursue. It is ~~possible~~ ^{likely} possible that the Kremlin ^{plans remain flexible} ~~itself~~ ^{has not yet reached a final decision}, but ~~rather intends~~ ^{The Communists may} to begin cease-fire discussions to discover how much freedom of action it could retain under cease-fire.

Handwritten notes:
 - "are likely" above "Communist"
 - "to predict with any assurance the" above "or what"
 - "likely" above "possible"
 - "plans remain flexible" above "itself"
 - "The Communists may" above "rather intends"

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terms, or ^{may intend} to conclude a cease-fire agreement and then enter into a discussion of military, territorial, and political issues

while ~~simultaneously building up~~ Communist military strength ^{is being} built up in North Korea or in Manchuria. The ~~Communists~~ ^{Communist} could in this way

avoid a final commitment to any ^{particular} ~~one~~ course of action until ^{they} ~~have~~ had an opportunity to study the political and military reactions of the West to the ~~developing~~ ^{as it develops} situation.

15. Nevertheless, In view of the foregoing analysis, we believe that the Communists probably have decided to forego their maximum objective in Korea (the ~~defeat~~ ^{expulsion} of UN forces), ~~as they can secure continued Communist domination of North Korea through the device of a protracted armistice.~~ The Kremlin will, ~~undoubtedly~~ attempt to gain maximum political and psychological advantage ~~on a global basis~~ ^{on a Communist-initiated armistice} from their tactical retreat in Korea, while ^{will attempt to} minimizing the loss of prestige involved in their abandonment of their maximum objective in ~~Korea~~ ^{Korea}. ~~Of the various possible objectives in proposing a cease-fire,~~ We believe ^{that} the most probable ~~is the objective of concluding an armistice of indefinite duration, which will be in effect a return to the status quo ante bellum.~~ ^{the Kremlin is to indefinitely prolonged} ~~If the Communists cannot secure a cease-fire on these terms, we believe they probably will protract the cease-fire negotiations to gain propaganda advantages while building up their capabilities for continued military operations as much as possible.~~ ^{result in} ~~possibly, with increased Soviet support.~~ ^{armistice}

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16. Although we believe the most probable Communist course of action to be an attempt to negotiate an armistice, we do not believe that in the post-armistice negotiations the Communists will retreat substantially from previous Chinese Communist and Soviet political demands for a Korean settlement.

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